

Late Backup

Mayor Adler

Item 66

June 28, 2018 Council Meeting

RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the City of Austin (“City”) upholds the values of accountability, ethics, and integrity at all levels of City government; and

WHEREAS, the City’s stated vision and values include a commitment to “maintain the trust and confidence of the public and the organization”; and

WHEREAS, one of the six Strategic Outcomes in the City’s Austin Strategic Direction 2023 is a “Government that Works for All of Us” Outcome, which states “believing that city government works effectively and collaboratively for all of us – that is equitable, ethical, and innovative”; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Public Information Act ensures “that each person is entitled, unless otherwise expressly provided by law, at all times to complete information about the affairs of government and the official acts of public officials and employees;” and

WHEREAS, the Public Information Request (PIR) process enables residents to obtain information about policy decisions and other activities related to the city, its staff, and its operations; and

WHEREAS, currently City Council offices separately provide responsive information to PIRs; and

WHEREAS, according to the former PIR system and its data, most Council Offices have seen an increase in PIRs over the past two years; and

WHEREAS, for example, City Council District 9 received approximately 62 PIRs in 2017, 74 PIRs in 2017, and 43 requests in just the first five months of 2018; and

WHEREAS, the amount of PIR requests received by Council Offices does not reflect the increasing complexity of both PIR requests and the type of records needed to fulfill requests; and

WHEREAS, due to the increasing complexity of the PIR requests and the resulting records that need to be compiled, responding and fulfilling PIR requests are becoming more time-intensive; and **WHEREAS**, the current PIR practice requires individual Council offices and their staff to separately coordinate a response process to the PIRs received; and

WHEREAS, state law provides “an e-mail address of a member of the public that is provided for the purpose of communicating electronically with a governmental body is confidential and not subject to disclosure,” and must be redacted from public information prior to its release; and

WHEREAS, most PIRs request emails as part of their request; and

WHEREAS, a typical PIR requires considerable staff hours to complete the redaction process; and

WHEREAS, in many cases, PIRs request emails that were sent to multiple Council offices, which means that staff members in different Council offices are duplicating the time-consuming redaction efforts; and

WHEREAS, City departments receive PIR requests and manage them differently, City Council Offices often get similar PIR requests, requiring duplicative redaction efforts; and

WHEREAS, the Council affirms both its commitment to the Public Information Act and its interest in maximizing taxpayer resources; and

WHEREAS, centralized PIR processing and coordination for City Council would almost certainly be a more efficient and more cost-effective process; **NOW THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to recommend an appropriate centralized staffing model that would report to Council and would allow for Public Information Requests received by Council offices to be responded to in an efficient and timely manner.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to formulate a budget item for Council consideration that includes the estimated salary and benefit costs for the determined staff model that would be tasked with processing and managing some or all Public Information Requests for all the Council offices. This budget item should not come out of existing City Council and Mayor's Office budgets.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to ~~return with a budget item to Council~~ provide Council with recommendations and analysis of the benefits, feasibility, and estimated annual budget impact of the changes listed above, along with any other or alternate potential changes to effect the intent of this resolution, in time for the item to be considered and potentially funded for the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Budget.

ADOPTED: _____ 2018

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk